



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of TED WILLIAMS



Written by AMA staff (072013); Added to HP files by JS (08/2013)

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*The following was published in the July 2013 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the "I Am the AMA" section.*

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## **I Am the AMA Ted Williams, Aviation artist and illustrator**

*JS: How did you get involved with model aviation?*

TW: In my early childhood, historical events of the postwar years conspired to bring me to model aviation. Chuck Yeager and the Bell X-1 were breaking the sound barrier; the military was transitioning from propeller planes to jets; airlines were enjoying unprecedented growth; and the air traffic in my hometown was quickly increasing.

At every family or neighborhood get-together there were dads, uncles, and family friends swapping war stories about their air adventures over Europe or the Pacific. And Herman's Hobby Shop opened for business on my daily route to and from school.

*JS: How has model aviation impacted your life and/or career?*

TW: Next to drawing and painting, craftsmanship is very important to an artist's work. As a modeler I learned early on that success comes from preparation, planning, and the proper use of tools and materials. Model aviation has been an aid in understanding aircraft structure and flight performance.

Good artists paint what they see; great artist paint what they know. Structure is fundamental to drawing any subject and modeling aircraft has helped me in my work.

*JS: What disciplines of modeling do you currently participate in?*

TW: I have participated in different areas of modeling through the years – Free Flight, Control Line, Pattern, and Scale Aerobatics. In the early 1980s, I settled into RC Giant Scale.

I also enjoy studying aviation history because the people who designed and built the famous and innovative aircraft to the past fascinate me.

Yet whether building from scratch or plans, I still delight in fabricating my own components rather than using a laser-cutting service. Making the parts myself is not only a personally satisfying exercise, it helps me to better envision the final assembly.

And I love flying these creations as much as building them. Piloting a newly built Scale aircraft for the first few time is always a knee-knocking experience that gets the adrenalin flowing. I enjoy the challenge of making these miniature replicas perform in the same manner as their full-scale counterparts.

*JS: What are your other hobbies?*

TW: Oil painting is my most avid interest. I also enjoy maintaining and driving my 1959 Triumph TR-3 named “Winston” (its bug-eyed countenance says it all). Early British sports cars have a personality and a drivability that is unique to the breed and, for me, putting these cars through their paces is a great way to clear the cobwebs and relieve stress.

*JS: Who (or what) has influenced you the most?*

TW: This is a tough question for me to answer in the space of this interview. With a successful career in graphic arts spanning over 40 years, there have been more than a few people and many experiences that have influenced me.

My wife, Gail, tops the list, along with my high school art teacher Fr. Bud Cullen C.S.B., and the Navy pilot of a PB4Y-2 Privateer who, in 1955, took an airplane-crazy fifth grader on his first flight. I have had many opportunities to fly in some great airplanes, but nothing will ever replace my cherished memory of flying over Lake Ontario in that big, lumbering patrol bomber.

*JS: How did you get started as an aviation artist and illustrator?*

TW: *How to Draw Planes*, by Frank Wootton, was my first book on drawing. During my grade school years, it was confiscated more than once during classes.

My enthusiasm for drawing the great airplanes of the day often got in the way of my schooling, which led my eighth-grade teacher to comment that I’d “best pay attention to my studies” because I would never make a living drawing airplanes. Thank goodness she was wrong.

Drawing and painting airplanes has always been a hobby of mine, but in the late 1970s I was hired by an ad agency to do a painting of a Spitfire for a client’s ad campaign. The ads appeared in quite a few trade magazines.

Many readers wanted to purchase a print of the Spitfire or contacted me for more work. Since then I have been working quite regularly providing paintings and illustrations to corporations, museums, magazines, book publishers, and for private commissions, as well as producing my own books on aircraft history.

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